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Global Film and Television Industries Today: An Analysis of Industrial and Cultural Relations

Nolwenn Mingant and Cecilia Tirtaine

1 Globalization has led to an increase in contacts between the film and television industries of different countries, particularly within the English-speaking world. The aim of this set of articles is to highlight specific issues brought about by globalization through different methodological approaches. The internationalization of film and television industries, linked to globalization, has had far-reaching consequences, from an industrial point of view, notably with the development of "runaway productions," as well as a cultural point of view, with an increased blurring of national frontiers and identities.

2 The phenomenon of "runaway productions," that is to say "movies that will be exploited in the United States but whose shooting has taken place outside Hollywood or abroad" (Peltzman), although not new, has become more prominent in the past two decades. Most runaways are motivated by economic reasons. The host countries – or, in the US, host states outside California – supply a workforce who is generally skilled, cheaper and less unionized. Local authorities and national governments also offer very attractive incentives, which, overall, dramatically bring down production costs. When studios, shooting or post-production facilities, did not exist in the host areas, the Hollywood majors have often participated in their setting up, as was the case on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia (Goldsmith, Ward, O'Regan). The other runaways are "creative runaway productions" (Peltzman). The production team chooses specific foreign locales for their "exoticism," their foreignness. Although the runaway phenomenon is usually associated with the major Hollywood studios, independent filmmakers have also relocated some of their productions abroad–see, for example, Jim Jarmusch, who shot *The Limits of Control* (2009) in Spain, or Woody Allen, who shot *Match Point* (2005), *Scoop* (2006) and *Cassandra's Dream* (2007) in Britain, *Vicky Christina Barcelona* (2008) in Spain, and *Midnight in Paris* (2011) in France, to name but a few. In those films, the location serves the

narrative and, in some instances, is a character (Murillo). Unsurprisingly, the ties are closer between countries sharing the English language, as the historically strong relationship between the US and the British film industries has shown. In the past two decades, Australia and New Zealand have also become important centers for runaway productions. However, English-speaking productions have looked for runaway opportunities well beyond this sphere, notably in Eastern Europe.

3 The recent runaway trend has had deep consequences. In *Global Hollywood*,[1] Miller *et al.* described the "international division of cultural labor" with a production labor force spanning the globe. In *The Film Studio*,[2] Goldsmith and O'Regan underline the increased competition on a global scale between production centers in different parts of the world. The articles in this issue draw attention to other consequences. Peltzman, for example, shows how fierce competition within the USA is, with several states trying to dethrone California as a major production centre. Besides, competition does not affect all the workers equally. The hardest hit by the consequences of the employment flexibility entailed by the runaway trend, are not the "above-the-liners" (actors, directors, etc.), but the "below-the-liners" (extras and technicians), who work locally, in Hollywood.

4 The internationalization of the film and television industry also raises cultural issues. The internationalization of capital, labor and shooting locations makes it difficult to determine the nationality of a film. Murillo's article, for example, questions the nationality of *The Limits of Control*, a film by a US director, shot on location in Spain, with an international cast and produced by US companies. The fact that Hollywood has been producing an increasing number of "French," "British," or "Australian" movies in recent years has further complicated the issue of how to pinpoint a film's "nationality." The blurring of cultural identity and of nationality is also at stake in film remakes and adaptations of TV series from one country to another, such as *Till Death Us Do Part* (1966) or *The Office* (2001)[3]. Defining the nationality of a film and program may, in some cases, be further complicated by the cultural identity they convey. There can be a discrepancy between the shooting location and the location it stands for (such as Vancouver posing as New York, for example). The blurring can be due to the use of several different languages by the characters in the film–and the characters' native language is not always that of the actors impersonating them. The phenomenon of the multilingual film is currently gaining importance in Hollywood blockbusters and Murillo shows that independent *auteur* Jim Jarmusch pushes this to the extreme.[4]

5 The following articles also point to the fact that nationality and cultural identity lie very much in the eye of the beholder. It is less something which exists *per se* than something constructed by the filmmaker, and re-appropriated by the audience. Jarmusch thus seems to favor a quasi-documentary approach to the Spanish landscape, in order to dissociate his films from the Spaghetti Westerns shot in the same locations in Andalucía. Both Murillo and Ducray also underline the issue of audience expectation in cultural terms. What US critics view as Spanishness is not the same for Spanish critics. What US and British audiences consider funny and "politically correct" (or not) in a sitcom is–in most cases–very different. Cultural representation is therefore strongly linked to cultural perception.

6 Despite a context of internationalization and recurrent back-and-forth inter-cultural contacts, films and television shows are thus still received and perceived very much locally. A program is decoded according to the standards of the community it is played to–hence the importance of tailoring programs for local audiences. The British example

developed by Ducray brings to mind recent cases of Hollywood film and TV producers adapting the series *The Nanny, Desperate Housewives* or *High School Musical* to cater to Latin American audiences. Reflecting on cultural identities and their representation is also an ideological process, as the "un-American" label given to *The Limits of Control* by US reviewers shows, or the compliance with "political correctness" in *The Office US* highlights. In the same way, as cultural and industrial issues are clearly intertwined, local considerations are very much in the minds of politicians, be they the American politicians called upon to devise protective legislation for Californian workers, or Australian politicians collaborating with film professionals to attract foreign film and television productions in their region–the same goes for any host country or region enticing productions with attractive deals (subsidies, tax breaks, etc.).

7 The global and local issues currently intersecting in the film and television industries can be approached in different ways. The articles in this themed section first insist on the necessity of a historical perspective to understand current phenomena and the reader will be taken back to the creation of Hollywood unions in the 1930s and to the birth of British television series in the 1940s. Different approaches are then used to depict these phenomena, from industrial to aesthetic analyses, from empirical descriptions to reception theories. But the articles also aim at foregrounding important concepts which will enable the development of reflection on these issues, such as Goldsmith, Ward and O'Regan's, which differentiates between "design interest" and "location interest," or Murillo's, which questions the term "independent."

8 The articles also approach the internationalization of the film and television industry in an innovative way, introducing alternative points of view, by choosing to show the positive consequences of Hollywood's involvement in production abroad, rather than only the negative, by deciding to interrogate the consequences on Hollywood itself and not only on the foreign locations, by opting for concentrating on independent cinema and not only Hollywood blockbusters, and by analyzing a British sitcom adapted for the USA and not one of many American formats exported abroad.

9 By challenging reflection with their different approaches, the articles underline that, as opposed to what is conventionally believed, the movement is not unidirectional, with Hollywood imposing its vision on foreign countries. From the very start, Ducray questions the relevance of the cultural imperialism theory in a globalized era. Her article foregrounds the necessity to re-conceptualize international relationships as cultural products (but also production teams) move back and forth. There seems to be less of a deterministic imposition from one center than a constant flow of influences and counter-influences. On the industrial level, Goldsmith, Ward and O'Regan's article on the Gold Coast insists on the way local interests take control of the development process and turn US involvement to their advantage. Although certain observers consider that some countries are little more than "niche-servicing industries" (see, for instance, Christie, for Britain),[5] Goldsmith, Ward and O'Regan contend that Hollywood-built studio sets on the Gold Coast enabled regional economic development. Those positive economic consequences are the reasons why more and more countries (but also American states, as explained by Peltzman) set up attractive deals and incentives to lure US productions. Hollywood is not the only driving force behind the phenomenon of internationalization, and it is not the only beneficiary.

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NOTES

1. Toby Miller *et al.*, *Global Hollywood* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001).
2. Ben Goldsmith and Tom O’Regan, *The Film Studio: Film Production in the Global Economy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2005).
3. Raphaëlle Moine, *Remakes : Les films français à Hollywood* (Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2007).
4. Nolwenn Mingant, *Hollywood à la conquête du monde : Marchés, stratégies, influences* (Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2010).
5. Christie, Ian, “Will Lottery Money Assure the British Film Industry?,” *New Statesman*, June 20, 1997.

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